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ABSTRACT

An examination of the level and nature of guidance that parents exercised with their children regarding television viewing was undertaken by means of a survey of 200 mass media scholars. In addition to providing information concerning their beliefs about the effects of television, characteristics of their scholarship, and basic demographic information, the scholars rated the frequency with which they used various parental guidance methods: (1) restrictive guidance--setting limits on the amount of time and type of programs that could be watched; (2) evaluative guidance--discussions with the child about the values portrayed on television; and (3) unfocused guidance--general discussions about television and covieing. Findings indicated that the scholars saw television effects as simultaneously good and bad. No significant relationships were found between a child's sex or number of television sets and the three guidance methods, however, evaluative guidance was least often used by the scholars, no matter what their teaching, research, or publishing orientation. The findings suggest that these scholars were no different from the general population in their use of restrictive guidance. (AEA)

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**DETERMINANTS OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE OF CHILDREN'S TELEVISION VIEWING
FOR A SPECIAL SUBGROUP: MASS MEDIA SCHOLARS**

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, broadcast industry officials and some regulators have tended to place increasing emphasis on parental responsibility in guiding their children's viewing, and researchers have begun to explore the benefits of such guidance. However, research exploring the actual incidence, nature and predictors of parental guidance is lacking. The present study contributes to this area of knowledge by examining the level and nature of parental guidance regarding television exercised by a special subgroup—mass media scholars. The study also focuses on the relationship of that guidance to beliefs the scholars hold about the effects of television, to characteristics of their scholarship, and to basic demographic information. The findings, surprising in the low use of specific dimensions of guidance and in the interesting relationships of those dimensions to certain kinds of attitudes toward television, carry with them implications for public policy as well as for new avenues of research.

RESEARCH BRIEF

TITLE: Determinants of Parental Guidance of Children's Television Viewing
for a Special Subgroup: Mass Media Scholars

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

In recent years, broadcast industry officials and some regulators have tended to place increasing emphasis on parental responsibility in guiding their children's viewing, and researchers have begun to explore the benefits of such guidance. However, research exploring the actual incidence, nature and predictors of parental guidance is lacking. The present study contributed to this area of knowledge by examining the level and nature of parental guidance regarding television exercised by a special subgroup--mass media scholars. The study also focused on the relationship of that guidance to beliefs the scholars hold about the effects of television, to characteristics of their scholarship, and to basic demographic information.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Scholar-parents guide their children's television viewing behavior using a variety of the 14 methods measured. On the average 26% of the scholar-parents said they use the 14 methods "often" and 34% said "sometimes." However, 31% of parents of the younger children (12 and under) said on the average they use these guidance methods "often" while only 13% of the parents of the older children (13 to 18) on the average characterized television guidance as happening "often." The range of using guidance methods "often" varied from 13% for "discussing the motivations of television characters with the child" to 44% for "talking to the child about a program while co-viewing."
2. Parental guidance methods seem to fall into one of three categories: Restrictive Guidance (setting limits on the amount of time and type of programs that could be watched), Evaluative Guidance (discussions with the child about the values portrayed on television) and Unfocused Guidance (general discussions about television and co-viewing).
3. In general the most frequently used type of guidance was Unfocused. Evaluative Guidance methods were least likely to be employed.
4. Although a comparison of the reported use of guidance methods by mass media scholar-parents with the general public must be limited since previous research tended to stress only Restrictive Guidance, with respect to the control (Restrictive Guidance) methods measured here, there seemed to be greater similarities in behavior than discrepancies.
5. While many factors could account for the type of guidance any individual parent might exercise, two basic patterns were found in the present study. The parent-scholar's sex and the child's age were more likely to be related to the use of Restrictive and Unfocused Guidance than to Evaluative Guidance. The parent-scholar's attitudes about the positive and negative effects of television were more likely to be related to Evaluative than the other two guidance types.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

In terms of the policy implications that can be derived from studying mass communication scholars, the results of this investigation point to several important issues. Approximately 60% of the scholars in this investigation reported using at least one of the 14 guidance methods "sometimes" or "often." This appears to be an optimistic finding. However, caution in interpreting this result is required for two reasons. While the overall exercise of guidance was relatively high, the most frequently used form of guidance was Unfocused. The effectiveness of this form of guidance, as well as the other two dimensions, must be assessed in future research. The second reason for caution comes from a close inspection of the extent to which guidance is predicted by the variables included in this study. The total variance accounted for in any dimension of guidance by the 18 multiple regression solutions never exceeded 25% and averaged about 15%. The distinction between social significance and statistical significance must be emphasized. While an average of 15% of variance accounted for its substantial in helping to understand the process of guidance, whether it represents a high enough degree of prediction to place the final responsibility for mediating the potentially harmful effects of television on parents is open to question.

Somewhat disturbing was the finding that Evaluative Guidance -- the method that implies the most purposive, critical and potentially most effective approach to guidance -- had the least likelihood of being predicted by the variables in the present study. In addition, Evaluative Guidance had the smallest possibility of being carried out by the mass media scholars in this population, no matter what their teaching, research, or publishing orientation.

DETERMINANTS OF PARENTAL GUIDANCE OF CHILDREN'S TELEVISION VIEWING
FOR A SPECIAL SUBGROUP: MASS MEDIA SCHOLARS

Since the rise of commercial television in the United States during the early 1950s, a good deal of criticism and fear has been voiced regarding the medium's harmful influence on children. While many groups have exhorted Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to force a "pro-social" reshaping of television content, and while these agencies have periodically "jawboned" the television industry toward remedial action, the government has remained unwilling to get directly involved in specifying or restricting the material broadcasters air. In recent years, industry officials and some regulators have tended to place increasing emphasis on parental responsibility in guiding their children's viewing, and researchers have begun to explore the benefits of such guidance. However, research exploring the actual incidence, nature, and predictors of parental involvement in child viewing throughout society is lacking. If public policy is to turn from media regulation to encouraging active parental (or other) guidance, systematic questions must be raised regarding the nature of such guidance, the circumstances under which it is likely to occur and its ultimate effectiveness in shaping children's viewing behavior or mediating the impact of that viewing behavior. The first two issues are the concern of the present investigation, which focuses on the parental activities of mass media scholars.

One might argue that individuals who would be among the least likely to need encouragement for involving themselves in their children's television activities would be mass media scholars -- academics with an active interest in the mass media. Aside from being familiar with the literature on "anti-social"

as well as "pro-social" effects of television, many of them participate in classroom and public discussions about the medium on a regular basis. It seems likely that this knowledge and concern would be translated into an active involvement with their children's viewing. If media scholars do tend to guide their children, the extent to which they do, and the manner in which they do, might suggest upper limits to possible modes of parental intervention in child viewing behavior. If those most knowledgeable about and interested in the mass media are not likely to guide their children's behavior, then one may ask how realistic it is to expect that parental mediation can influence the effects of television in the public at large. At the same time, mass media scholars' guidance activities are important to study because of the potential for this group to exert opinion leadership in the larger society on the television guidance issue. Consequently, the present investigation examines the level and nature of parental guidance regarding television exercised by mass media scholars as well as the relationship of that guidance to beliefs the scholars hold about the effects of television, to characteristics of their scholarship, and to family demographic information. The findings suggest the existence of specific dimensions of guidance, carry with them implications for social policy and suggest new avenues for research.

BACKGROUND

Over the past several years, an increasing number of writers have emphasized that children's learning can be facilitated, channeled in certain directions, or counteracted through parental guidance of their child's viewing. There seems to be general agreement among researchers that orienting children toward pro-social programs as well as toward non-television activities will limit the potential harmfulness of the home tube.¹ In addition, several

investigators have claimed that parental discussions with children about what they are watching can mitigate "anti-social" lessons of television shows and encourage "pro-social" learning.²

Despite the potential such research holds for increasing children's pro-social learning from television, little systematic research has been conducted on the types, extent or determinants of guidance. Two general kinds of guidance have received attention in the literature: 1) restrictions imposed on the amount of child viewing time and on material viewed; and 2) discussions with the child about the particular material in the programs. Typically, field studies have been primarily devoted to examining restrictive guidance as opposed to parent-child discussion of television. Laboratory studies have tended to concentrate on the latter form, emphasizing methods such as labeling, discussions of reality and fantasy, and discussions of character motives.³ Studies employing either methodological approach usually focus only on one or two guidance methods within a particular investigation. This relatively scattered approach has left several gaps in the understanding of guidance. One gap concerns a lack of information on the extent to which parent-child discussions are employed. The second gap is conceptually more important. The tendency of studies to be unidimensional in focus has hampered the investigation of the interrelationship among the various forms of guidance. A key purpose of the present study is to simultaneously measure the use of a wide variety of guidance forms in order to examine the possibility of underlying dimensionality.

Regarding the extent of guidance, a number of studies, employing various measures and dealing primarily with issues other than guidance, do point to one conclusion: Most parents are quite unlikely to control their children's viewing--particularly their amount of viewing--in a consistent manner. For

example, Lyle and Hoffman⁴ found that over 60% of the mothers of first graders they interviewed placed no restrictions on the amount of time they let their children view. Bower⁵ found that over 50% of the parents in a national sample said they do not "often" control viewing time, either in terms of restricting the amount of time (between 70% and 61%, depending upon age) or setting special hours (between 59% and 54%, depending upon age). Interestingly, he found that while control over viewing time tended to decline somewhat when children reached 10 years of age, control over specific content (i.e., specifying programs that can be watched and forbidding the viewing of certain programs) showed a rise among 10-12 year olds compared to younger children.

While some attention has been paid to the extent of restrictive guidance less is known about the extent of parent-child discussions on television content. Possibilities for this type of guidance apparently exist. Lyle and Hoffman⁶, Bower⁷, and others found that a majority of parents and children watch together "sometimes," though not "often." Of course, joint viewing does not necessarily mean explicit or even implicit parental television guidance. Allen⁸ and LoSciuto⁹ point out that much activity and conversation unrelated to television takes place in front of the set. Greenberg, Erickson, and Vlahos¹⁰ in fact, concluded that television viewing is generally not accompanied by any significant family interaction directed toward the medium or its content. No published study could be found that explores the specifics of parent-child discussions while watching television. Two unpublished studies point in different directions. One--Mohr's¹¹ exploration of parental guidance of 9-15 year olds--related to Saturday morning children's shows only. About 70% of the parents in his sample reported giving neither positive nor negative advice about the Saturday morning shows. The other unpublished study, by Atkin and Greenberg¹² involved asking 4th, 6th, and 8th graders in a moderately sized

Michigan city how often they heard certain statements "your parents might have told you about detective programs when you were a little younger." In that case, the investigators found that a large majority (depending on the statement, between 67% and 80%) claimed to recall their parents making pro-social, learning-oriented remarks about television "sometimes" or "often."

In this study, the simultaneous measurement of a wide variety of guidance forms provides an opportunity for direct, comparative assessments of the frequency of content guidance while allowing for an examination of its interrelatedness with other guidance forms. It also allows a systematic investigation into the demographic and attitudinal determinants of parental guidance. Current research on this topic is particularly scarce. The research that does exist tends to be confined to only one form of parental guidance (restriction on viewing time), to focus on simple linear prediction, to seldom go beyond considering demographic predictors, and to be somewhat contradictory. For example, a few studies found a relationship between parental education¹³ or class on child viewing, but two other studies¹⁴ found no such links. Gross and Walsh¹⁵ found that the child's (young) age and (female) sex related significantly to increased parental restrictions on viewing. They also found that the greater the number of television sets in the home, the less the chance parents restricted their child's viewing.

No research could be found on attitudinal factors that predict certain kinds of guidance. Comstock, et al.¹⁶ suggest that parental concerns about television's role in child socialization might be fundamental predictors of control over child viewing. They do not suggest the precise nature of this relationship, but it is true that concern with detrimental (rather than beneficial) effects of television is the dominant rationale groups such as Action For Children's Television present for guiding youngsters' viewing.¹⁷ It

seems reasonable that this motivation would apply to parents generally--that is, that a professed concern about the ill effects of television would be more associated with guidance than would a professed awareness of the positive consequences of viewing.

In addition, the possibility exists that parental attitudes about television may not by themselves have a direct impact on the implementation of guidance. It may be that parental attitudes act as motivational forces for guidance only under certain circumstances. For example, parents who feel viewing television has harmful effects may nevertheless refrain from exercising guidance because they believe their children are old enough to make their own viewing, as well as their own moral, decisions. Other parents with negative attitudes about the television viewing experience may guide their female children but not their male children because those parents hold values about the differing sensitivities of the two genders. Moreover, in the specific case of mass media scholars, continual contact with literature about television may affect, reflect, or in some other way relate to the person's academic work environment. Tentatively, it can be suggested that differences between scholars' attitudes toward television -- and in the frequency and nature of their guidance -- will be found to relate to differences in orientation toward teaching (concentrating on "skills" courses or "theory" courses), preferred research method (having a quantitative, empirical bias or a qualitative, "humanistic" bias), and scholarly publishing (authoring relatively many or few articles for refereed journals).

The present study examines these possibilities by investigating the nature of mass media scholars' attitudes toward television, the interrelationship of these attitudes, and their relationship to guidance. In addition, the study examines selected test variables in order to determine the

extent of their direct relationship with parental guidance attitudes in predicting guidance. The test variables include the age and sex of the child, the number of television sets in the home, and the three characteristics of mass media scholarship.

METHOD

Questionnaires were sent to mass media scholars throughout the United States. For the purpose of this study, mass media scholars were defined as all members of the Theory and Methodology Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and all members of the Mass Communication Division of the Speech Communication Association--a total population of 784 individuals. These two groups were selected in order to maximize the diversity of types of scholars while minimizing organizational overlap. After the first mailing, 388 questionnaires were completed and returned. A follow-up mailing resulted in an additional 94 replies, for a total response rate of 62% (486/784). Of the 486 respondents, 200 were parents of children 18 years or younger. This group comprised the population examined in this investigation.

Three sections of the questionnaire bore upon the issues and hypotheses raised. In the first, the academics were asked specifically about their attitudes about television's effects on children. Eighteen statements were presented that attributed to children's television viewing various commonly debated consequences--that it leads to a decrease in attention span, to an increase in verbal ability, to an increase in knowledge about the world, etc. (see Table 2). Respondents noted whether they felt television was "the cause" of each phenomenon, an "important contributory cause," a "somewhat important contributory cause," or "not at all an important contributory cause" (or whether they didn't know). Following this section were 14 questions asking the

scholars about the frequency (often, sometimes, rarely, or never) with which they use certain methods to control or guide their youngest child's television viewing behavior. For example, the parent/scholars were asked if they change channels on objectionable programs, set up time restrictions regarding viewing, discuss television in a general manner with their children, or discuss specific aspects of programming with them. Scholars were asked to respond in terms of their youngest child in order to elicit comparable responses. The last section of the questionnaire asked a variety of demographic questions about the scholars, their youngest child, and certain characteristics of their scholarship.

RESULTS

The Population. The great majority (86%) of the parent-academics who answered the questionnaire were men. The 200 respondents ranged in age from 26 to 65, the average age being 40 and the median age being 39. While 39% noted they blend "theory" and "skills" courses in their teaching, 35% noted "theory" as their primary orientation, and 27% said their primary teaching load related to "skills" courses. At the same time, 30% of the respondents preferred a "quantitative" approach to research, another 30% preferred "qualitative" methods, and 40% indicated they could not make such a forced choice. Most were at least somewhat active in scholarly publishing. A clear majority (67%) had articles published in refereed scholarly journals over the course of the previous three years. Half of the sample noted that from two to five of their articles came to print during that time, while 2% of the respondents reported the publication of fifteen or more pieces. The academics varied widely in the ages of their youngest children. The average age was 8, and 68% of the

youngsters were less than 13 years old. The sex of the children was nearly evenly split.

Levels of Guidance

A preliminary differentiation of the respondents by the age of their children reveals what would be expected from previous research: Parents of children under age 13 guide their youngsters' viewing more often than do parents of children 13 through 18. On average for the whole sample, 26% of the academics said they use the 14 guidance methods "often" and 34% said "sometimes." However, 31% of parents from the younger group on average said they "often" use guidance methods (34% said "sometimes"), while only 13% of the parents from the older group, on average, characterized television guidance as happening "often" (26% said "sometimes"). The incidence of using particular kinds of guidance varied widely both within and across the two groups. For example, in the case of all scholar/parents, from 13% to 44% (depending on the method) reported using guidance "often." With parents of children ages 12 or younger, the range of those using guidance "often" stretched from 15% to 46%, and with parents of children aged 13 through 18, the range spanned from 2% to 37%.

Determining the specific guidance methods most commonly used by the scholars is most accurately reported by listing the 14 items in the order of their mean values. However, since the percentages of response categories provide more interpretable figures that are more comparative with past research on guidance, these will be reported along with the mean scores. Occasional discrepancies in the two data reduction techniques will appear since a percentage rank-ordering does not allow for a weighting of all categories.

Ranking by means, then, the four guidance methods reported as most common in the population were (1) talking to the child about a program while

co-viewing--44% often/33% sometimes, (2) encouraging the viewing of specific programs--33%/44%, (3) watching with the child--32%/44%, and (4) discussing with a child a program just viewed or about to be viewed--30%/48%. With the exception of the "encouragement" item, these more frequently employed methods are remarkably similar in reflecting general, unfocused guidance.

The next five most frequently used items represent a more active, directive approach to guidance. The items were (5) setting restrictions on the amount of television a child is allowed to watch--33%/26%, (6) explaining that the programs are not about real people--26%/30%, (7) specifying programs that can be watched--27%/25%, (8) setting special hours during which the child can watch--28%/20%, and (9) discussing the motivations of television characters with the child--13%/40%.

The final five items also represent an active, directive approach to guidance. However, while the above five items are weighted toward physical restrictions, the final five items share an approach characterized more by discussion of television's values. These were (10) pointing out to the child the bad things television characters are doing--19%/30%, (11) switching the channel on objectionable programs that the child is watching--24%/23%, (12) forbidding the viewing of certain programs--23%/24%, (13) explaining the meaning of television advertisements--17%/30%, and (14) pointing out the good things that television characters are doing--14%/32%.

A comparison of the reported frequencies with which the mass media scholars use the guidance methods with reported frequencies in the general population must necessarily be limited, since previous research tended to stress only controls on viewing. With respect to the five "control" methods--restricting viewing time, setting special hours, specifying programs that can be watched, switching channels on objectionable shows, and forbidding

the viewing of certain programs--Bower's¹⁸ national sample of parents with children under 13 years old provides the best comparison, since Bower used the same items. Focusing on scholar/parents of children younger than 13 who reported using the five methods "often" reveals percentages (from 28 to 39, depending on the method) that were quite similar to the percentages of parents in Bower's sample who said they use those guidance forms "often." A bit looser interpretation of the "control" item allows comparison between academic and non-academic parents of older children, as well. Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin¹⁹ found that 10% of those families reported having rules for the teens' television viewing. In this study the proportion of scholars with children 13 through 18 who reported controlling their youngsters' television viewing "often" (a situation akin to having rules) ranged from 2% to 15%, depending on the method of control. The numbers suggest that with both younger and older children mass media scholars were quite similar to the population at large.

Two interesting patterns emerge from the above discussion of levels of guidance. The first is that the most frequently employed guidance methods are the least focused and probably require the least physical or psychological effort from the parent. The second is that there seems to be some conceptual commonality among various items evidenced in their groupings by frequency of use. This second observation is put to a more rigorous test in the next stage of analysis.

The Nature of Parental Guidance

Factor analysis was used to empirically examine the dimensionality of the 14 guidance items. A principal components solution with varimax rotation was employed. As Table 1 shows, the first factor contained guidance methods that

Table One About Here

forbid the viewing of certain programs, set restrictions on the amount of television a child may watch, set special hours during which a child may watch, set special hours during which a child may watch, specified programs that could be watched, and switched channels on objectionable programming. The factor was labeled Restrictive Guidance. Loading on the second factor were methods of guidance through which the parents helped the child evaluate the meaning, morality, and characterization of television programs; explaining the meaning of television advertising, discussing the motivations of television characters, pointing out the good things television actors are doing, pointing out the bad things television characters are doing, and explaining to the child that the programs are not about real people. This factor was labeled Evaluative Guidance. The third factor's label, Unfocused Guidance, derives from the relatively general nature of the interactions it subsumes—watching television with the child, encouraging the viewing of certain program, talking to a child about a show while watching it, and discussing with a child a show just viewed or about to be viewed.

The dimensionality of the three factors is surprisingly consistent with past research. The presence of a Restrictive Guidance dimension provides some empirical validation of past conceptualizations of this guidance form as a distinct approach. The differentiation of an Evaluative from an Unfocused dimension lends support to LoSciuto²⁰ and others who have noted that parents' viewing with their children does not necessarily imply that specific, directive guidance is taking place. In addition, inspecting these dimensions in terms of

the levels of guidance discussed above, it is seen that the Unfocused Guidance dimension represents the collection of most frequently employed items. This supports the impression gleaned from comparing various studies²¹ that Unfocused Guidance is more common than Restrictive Guidance. For the present study these three dimensions of parental guidance constitute the primary dependent variables.

Nature of Perceived Effects

Before turning to an analysis of the determinants of parental guidance, it is first necessary to develop a better understanding of the interrelationship of the various perceptions mass media scholars hold concerning the effects of television on children. In the present study scholars were asked to indicate the causal importance of television for 18 various behavioral and psychological states found in children. The 18 states were selected to represent the many possible effects television has been charged and credited with.

These 18 items were factor analyzed to empirically examine any underlying dimensionality. A principal components solution with varimax rotation was again used. Two factors emerged with one item ("reinforces social values") seriously split between the two dimensions. This item was eliminated and the remaining items reanalyzed. Two fairly distinct factors emerged accounting for 45 percent of the total variance. From a post hoc perspective the items loaded on the two factors in a simple, understandable pattern. The two factors were labeled Anti-Social and Pro-Social Effects. As can be noted in Table 2, the

Table Two About Here

four perceptions that fit most strongly into the "anti-social" effects factor related to television's ability to increase aggressive behavior, decrease creativity, increase alienation, and increase desire for immediate gratification. Four items constituted the Prosocial Effects dimension—perceptions that related to television's ability to increase knowledge and awareness of the world, increase verbal ability, increase pro-social behavior, and increase curiosity.

Although the dimensionality of perceived effects makes sense in an intuitive sense, it is somewhat different than anticipated. It was expected that Anti-Social and Pro-Social perceived effects would represent bi-polar end-points of attitudes toward television. Instead, the present analysis portrays these two perspectives as independent. This suggests that scholars hold a sophisticated view of television effects. That is, television is viewed as simultaneously good and bad. The differential impact of these two perspectives on parental guidance will be examined. The two dimensions of perceived effects are included as independent variables in the predictive model for each of the three dimensions of parental guidance.

Predictors of Parental Guidance

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to analyze the relationship of the family demographic, perceived effects, dimensions of scholarship and interaction variables to the three dimensions of parental guidance (See Tables 3-4). The first block in the model represents a test for and control of

 Tables Three and Four About Here

scholar's age, scholar's sex and age of the youngest child (for which parental guidance measures were gathered). The second block contains the two dimensions of television's perceived effects. The third block represents the simple, additive effect of selected test variables, including family demographics (age of youngest child, sex of youngest child and number of television sets in the house) and three dimensions of scholarship (teaching orientation, research orientation, and number of refereed publications in academic journals). The fourth and final block contains the interaction terms for the two perceived effects dimensions and the appropriate test variable. Multiple regression analysis was conducted for each of the three dimensions of parental guidance for each of the six test variables, yielding eighteen multiple regression equations.

Direct Effects. The results for the first three family demographic variables and the two dimensions of perceived effects, for each of the three parental guidance dimensions, are shown in Table 3. While scholar's age appears to be unrelated to any of the guidance dimensions, scholar's sex and child's age show significant yet varying patterns of relationship--providing support for a multidimensional conceptualization of parental guidance. Female scholars are more likely than their male counterparts to engage in Restrictive and Unfocused Guidance, although scholar's sex is unrelated to Evaluative Guidance. Consistent with previous research, scholars are more likely to exert guidance for younger children--however, this only applies to Restrictive Guidance. Unfocused Guidance shows a positive significant relationship with child's age. This may be the result of greater co-viewing due to mutual interest with older children. Child's age, like scholar's age and scholar's sex does not seem to be related to Evaluative Guidance.

The dimensions of the perceived television effects were similar to the above family demographics in showing high degree of selectivity in relation to the three dimensions of parental guidance. As anticipated, perception of negative effects was more related to guidance, than was perception of positive effects--but only in the number of significant relationships. The Anti-Social dimension was significantly related to Restrictive and Evaluative Guidance, while the Pro-Social dimension, although related only to Evaluative Guidance, exhibited a substantially stronger relationship.

Other Direct Effects. The results for the six test variables, whose direct as well as interactive effects with the perceived effects dimensions are to be examined, are presented in Table 4. A quick glance at the table reveals that none of these variables is strongly related to the three guidance dimensions. The publication variable shows a marginally significant negative standardized coefficient for Evaluative Guidance and teaching orientation exhibits a similarly weak positive coefficient for Restrictive Guidance. Somewhat surprising, and contrary to past research, is the absence of any significant relationships between child's sex or number of television sets and the three guidance dimensions.

What might account for this absence of anticipated relationships? One possible explanation lies in the homogeneity of the sample. Factors such as child's sex and number of television sets in the home, while potentially important factors in a general population, may not be of significance for an active, educated audience. Their interest and awareness may lead them to treat their children equivalently in terms of sex and make them less likely to be responsive to the differential opportunity for guidance afforded by the number of television sets in the home. In terms of the dimensions of scholarship,

although there is some degree of variability in the measures, overall mass media scholars may be much more alike than different.

A second explanation may be that these individual items, while creating a predisposition to engage in guidance, are not in and of themselves capable of motivating a scholar/parent. An additional requirement for action may be the presence of a strongly held as well as complimentary attitude about the effects of television. A test of this explanation was provided by the creation of interaction terms between these items and the two perceived effects dimensions.

Interactive Effects. The second explanation advanced above for the lack of significant direct effects of child's sex or number of television received little support. In general, the interaction terms contributed little to the prediction of guidance. Only four of the 36 standardized regression coefficients for the interaction terms were significant, and one of these was only at a marginal ($p = .10$) level. The significant interactions that did emerge were interpreted as follows: 1) The chance of using Restrictive Guidance when a scholar perceives pro-social effects in television viewing increases when the child is a boy; 2) The perception that television has anti-social effects increases the chance that a quantitatively-oriented scholar will use Unfocused Guidance; 3) The chance of using Unfocused Guidance as a child grows older increases with a negative perception that television has pro-social effects; and 4) The negative perception that television has pro-social effects increases the chance that a scholar with a humanistic research orientation will use Evaluative Guidance. The notion of a "negative" perception of pro-social effects grows out of the two-dimensional (i.e. not bi-polar) nature of perceived television effects as determined in the factor analysis. It seems to indicate a neutral or uncertain attitude toward the possibility that television has positive social consequences, and its

relationship to guidance deserves further investigation. Here, however, it must be said that no logical pattern was readily apparent among the four significant interaction effects. In view of the large number of interaction terms examined and found insignificant, it is quite possible that these four significant terms were due to chance.

DISCUSSION

A discussion of the findings must proceed from two perspectives: First, in terms of their importance to theory and research concerning parental guidance and second, in terms of the public policy implications.

In terms of theory and research in parental guidance the present study has provided some support for previous research into demographic predictors of parental guidance while clarifying and systematically extending the conceptualization of the nature of guidance (to a multi-dimensional concept) and the determinants of guidance (to include attitudinal and interactive effects). Specifically, three distinct dimensions of guidance were discovered: Restrictive, Evaluative and Unfocused. While the possibility exists that these dimensions may be statistical artifacts due to the nature of the analytic techniques employed, several points attribute to their validity. Individual guidance items showed strong, independent loadings on each dimension. The dimensions showed a considerable logical relationship with past research on guidance as well as substantial face validity. Perhaps most important, however, is the logical, yet differential relationship of the three dimensions to the various determinants examined.

Consistent with past research the child's age was found to be significantly, although differentially, related to guidance. Restrictive Guidance was more likely to be employed for younger children than older

children and Unfocused Guidance was more likely to be employed for older children than younger children. The research did not find a significant direct effect for child's sex (although child's sex did enter into a puzzling significant interactions with the Pro-Social Effect dimension) or for number of television sets in the home.

Both of these results run counter to Gross and Walsh's²² pilot study of 100 Los Angeles families which found that restrictive guidance was more likely for girls than for boys and in homes where there were few television sets. One explanation for the discrepancy in results between the two studies for the sex difference might be that mass media scholars, representing a highly educated subgroup in the population, tend to value an androgynous approach to child rearing. However, since parent attitudes toward child rearing practices were not measured this cannot be tested. The discrepancy in results for the effect of number of television sets in the home could be due to a lack of controls in the Gross and Walsh study. For the mass media scholar population, the number of television sets in the home did exhibit a moderately negative simple correlation with Restrictive Guidance ($r = -.14$). However, the number of sets was also correlated with perceptions of Pro-Social Effects of television ($r = .20$) and perceptions of Anti-Social Effects ($r = -.11$). Consequently, when these perceptions were controlled for, the television set-guidance relationship diminished, suggesting that the number of television sets in the home may not be an indication of the opportunity for guidance but an index of attitudes about television effects.

The introduction of the parent/scholars' perceptions about the effects of television proved fruitful in logically extending predictors of guidance beyond family demographics. Using a conservative hierarchical test, three of the six standardized regression coefficients relating "perceived effects" to guidance

were significant. The perception of anti-social effects for television was linked to Restrictive and Evaluative Guidance and the perception of pro-social effects was linked to Evaluative Guidance. Overlaying these findings with those regarding family demographic variables exhibits a striking contrast: The family demographics showed strong relationships to Unfocused Guidance (with respect to female scholars and older children), moderate relationship to Restrictive Guidance (with respect to female scholars and younger children), and no relationship to Evaluative Guidance. On the other hand, the two "perceived effects" dimensions exhibited a nearly opposite configuration. They were strongly related to Evaluative Guidance, moderately related to Restrictive Guidance, and showed no relationship to Unfocused Guidance.

Sense can be made of this pattern in view of the finding that Unfocused Guidance is the most frequently employed approach and Evaluative Guidance is the least used form. The three guidance dimensions can be seen as forming a continuum of activities associated with increasing physical and psychological costs. Unfocused Guidance may be exercised merely in response to opportunity for guidance provided by the particular age of the child and/or the sex of the parent. Unfocused methods of guidance such as joint parent-child viewing and general discussions about television are naturally more likely as the child grows older, since parent-child abilities and interests coincide more. Similarly, such guidance could be most easily carried out by the mother as opposed to the father because of the primary emphasis on the female in traditional American child rearing.²³ Restrictive Guidance, by contrast, would seem to require greater psychological and physical commitment from parents than does Unfocused Guidance. Consequently, opportunity becomes less important as a determinant of guidance and perceived need to guide becomes more important. Restrictive Guidance is therefore exercised more with younger than older

children, presumably out of greater general parental tendency to control younger children. That kind of guidance is also related to parental belief that television exerts a significant social impact, particularly a negative impact. Restrictive Guidance does not, however, require as great a commitment to influencing children's viewing experiences as does Evaluative Guidance. Therefore, it stands to reason that using Evaluative Guidance would relate not to demographic variables (which seem to imply opportunity to guide more than overriding concern regarding television and children) but, rather, to strongly held beliefs about television's effects, whether they be positive or negative.

In terms of the policy implications that can be derived from studying mass communication scholars, the results of this investigation point to several important issues. Approximately 60% of the scholars in this investigation reported using at least one of the 14 guidance methods "sometimes" or "often." This appears to be an optimistic finding. However, caution in interpreting this result is required for two reasons. While the overall exercise of guidance was relatively high, the most frequently used form of guidance was Unfocused. The effectiveness of this form of guidance, as well as the other two dimensions, must be assessed in future research. The second reason for caution comes from a close inspection of the extent to which guidance is predicted by the variables included in this study. The total variance accounted for in any dimension of guidance by the 18 multiple regression solutions never exceeded 25% and averaged about 15%. The distinction between social significance and statistical significance must be emphasized. While an average of 15% of variance accounted for is substantial in helping to understand the process of guidance, whether it represents a high enough degree of prediction to place the final responsibility for mediating the potentially harmful effects of television on parents is open to question.²⁴

Somewhat disturbing was the finding that Evaluative Guidance -- the method that implies the most purposive, critical and potentially most effective approach to guidance -- had the least likelihood of being predicted by the variables in the present model. In addition, Evaluative Guidance had the smallest possibility of being carried out by the mass media scholars in this population, no matter what their teaching, research, or publishing orientation.

Rough comparisons with previous studies²⁵ suggest that the mass media scholars are not much different from the general population in their use of Restrictive Guidance. Future research should investigate whether this similarity extends to all three guidance methods. In addition research should also investigate the comparative success of the various guidance methods in mediating the impact of television viewing behavior.

NOTES

¹George Comstock, Steven Chaffee, Natan Katzman, Maxwell McCombs, and Donald Roberts, *TELEVISION AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 284.

²D. J. Hicks, "Effects of Co-observer's Sanctions and Adult Presence on Imitative Aggression," *CHILD DEVELOPMENT* 38:303-309 (1968); Sandra Ball and G. Bogartz, *THE FIRST YEAR OF SEASAME STREET: AN EVALUATION* (Princeton: The Educational Testing Service, 1970); Charles Atkin and Walter Gantz, "How Children Use Television News Programs: Patterns of Exposure and Effects," paper presented at the 1974 meeting of the International Communication Association; and Charles Atkin and Bradley Greenberg, "Parental Mediations of Children's Social Behavior: Learning From Television," unpublished manuscript, Michigan State University, 1977.

³B. Coates and W. W. Hartup, "Age and Verbalization in Observational Learning," *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY* 1:556-562 (1969); and L. K. Friedrich and A. H. Stein, "Prosocial Television and Young Children: The Effects of Verbal Labeling and Role Playing on Learning Behavior," *CHILD DEVELOPMENT* 46:27-38.

⁴Jack Lyle and Heidi Hoffman, "Children's Use of Television and other Media," in E. A. Rubinstein, G. A. Comstock, and J. P. Murray (eds.), *TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, VOLUME 4* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1972).

⁵Robert Bower, *TELEVISION AND THE PUBLIC* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

⁶Jack Lyle and Heidi Hoffman, "Children's Use of Television and Other Media."

⁷Robert Bower, *TELEVISION AND THE PUBLIC*.

⁸C. L. Allen, "Photographing the TV Audience," JOURNAL OF ADVERTISING RESEARCH 5:2-8 (1965).

⁹L. A. LoSciuto, "A National Inventory of Television Viewing Behavior," in E. A. Rubinstein, G. A. Comstock, and J. P. Murray (eds.), TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, VOLUME 4 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1972).

¹⁰B. S. Greenberg, P. M. Ericson, and M. Vlahos, "Children's Television Behavior as Perceived by Mother and Child," in E. A. Rubinstein, G. A. Comstock, and J. P. Murray (eds.), TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, VOLUME 4 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972).

¹¹Mohr, P. J. "Television, Children and Parents." Unpublished report, Department of Speech Communication, Wichita State University, 1978.

¹²C. Atkin and B. S. Greenberg, "Parental Mediation of Children's Social Behavior: Learning From Television," Unpublished manuscript, Michigan State University, 1977.

¹³R. Bower, TELEVISION AND THE PUBLIC.

¹⁴R. Blood, "Social Class and Family Control of Television Viewing," MERRILL-PALMER QUARTERLY 7:205-222 (1970).

¹⁵L. S. Gross and R. P. Walsh, "Factors Affecting Parental Control Over Children's Television Viewing: A Pilot Study," JOURNAL OF BROADCASTING 24:411-419 (1980).

¹⁶G. Comstock, S. Chaffee, N. Katzman, M. McCombs, and D. Roberts, TELEVISION AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR, p. 190.

¹⁷Kaye (ed.), THE FAMILY GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S TELEVISION (New York, Pantheon, 1974).

¹⁸R. Bower, TELEVISION AND THE PUBLIC.

¹⁹S. Chaffee, J. McLeod, and C. Atkin, "Parental Influence on Adolescent Media Use," *AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST* 14:323-40 (1971).

²⁰L. A. LoSociuto, "A National Inventory of Television Viewing Behavior," in E. A. Rubinstein, G. A. Comstock, and J. P. Murray (eds.) *TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR*, VOLUME 4.

²¹C. Atkin and B. S. Greenberg, "Parental Mediation of Children's Social Behavior," R. Bowers, *TELEVISION AND THE PUBLIC*; and J. Lyle and Heidi Hoffman, "Children's Use of Television and Other Media."

²²L. S. Gross and R. Walsh, "Factors Affecting Parental Control over Children's Television Viewing: A Pilot Study."

²³This interpretation is bolstered by a near-significant correlation ($r = -.11$, $p > .10$) between scholar's sex and the similarity of parent-child viewing. That is, female scholars and their children exhibited a higher correspondence of viewing habits (as reported by the scholars) than did male scholars and their children.

²⁴One final qualification to the study must be included. Throughout the results and discussion sections terms implying causality have been used. While the nature of the independent variables selected for the study logically suggest time-order, the final issue of causality is still open to question.

²⁵Robert Bower, *TELEVISION AND THE PUBLIC* and S. Chaffee, J. McLeod, and C. Atkin, "Parental Influence on Adolescent Media Use," *AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENTISTS* 14:323-40 (1971).

TABLE ONE
Factor Loadings of Parental Guidance of Child Television Viewing Items

FACTOR	1	2	3
<u>Restrictive Guidance</u>			
How often do you. . .			
forbid the viewing of certain programs?			.76
set up restrictions on how much TV your child watches?			.82
set up special hours when your child can watch?			.78
specify programs that can be watched?			.83
switch the channel on an objectionable program?			.70
<u>Evaluative Guidance</u>			
explain the meaning of TV ads?			.68
discuss the motivations of TV characters with child?			.67
point out good things TV actors are doing?			.74
points out bad things TV actors are doing?			.82
explain to your child that the programs are not about real people?			.62
<u>Unfocused Guidance</u>			
watch TV with your child?			.64
encourage viewing of specific programs?			.61
talk to your child about a show while you are watching it?			.84
discuss with your child a show just viewed or about to be viewed?			.69
TOTAL VARIANCE ACCOUNTED FOR:		48%	11% 06%

n = 200. A principle components solution with varimax rotation was used. Loadings below .45 have been eliminated to simplify interpretation.

TABLE TWO
Factor Loadings of Perceived Television Effect Items

FACTOR	1	2
<u>Anti-Social Effects</u>		
Increases stereotyping of sex roles.	.52	
Increases interest in sex.	.58	
Decreases reading.	.53	
Increases desire for immediate gratification.	.65	
Decreases creativity.	.67	
Increases aggressive behavior.	.75	
Increases alienation.	.66	
Decreases physical activity.	.57	
Breaks down social values.	.61	
Increases buying behavior.	.54	
Distorts perceptions of the political system.	.51	
Increases stereotyping of ethnic groups.	.47	
Decreases attention span.	.61	
<u>Pro-Social Effects</u>		
Increases knowledge and awareness of the world.		.65
Increases verbal ability.		.71
Increases prosocial behavior.		.59
Increases curiosity.		.69
TOTAL VARIANCE ACCOUNTED FOR:	33%	12%

Note: N = 200. A principal components solution with varimax rotation was used. Loadings below .45 have been eliminated to simplify interpretation.

TABLE THREE
Three Dimensions of Parental Guidance:
Standardized Regression Coefficients of Demographic
and Perceived Effects Variables

<u>Demographics</u>	<u>Dimensions of Parental Guidance</u>		
	<u>Restrictive</u>	<u>Evaluative</u>	<u>Unfocused</u>
Scholar's Age	-.02	-.02	-.01
Scholar's Sex (Male + 1)	-.42 ^c	-.10	-.47 ^b
Age of Youngest Child	-.09 ^a	.00	.06 ^b
R ²	.202 ^a	.023	.078 ^a
<u>Perceived Television Effects</u>			
Anti-Social (A)	.20 ^b	.17 ^b	-.08
Pro-Social (P)	-.04	.28 ^a	.06
Incremental R ²	.023 ^c	.072 ^a	.014

Note: The incremental R² indicates the added variance accounted for by the two dimensions of perceived effects over and above the variance accounted for by scholars age, scholar's sex and age of youngest child. significance is indicated at the .10 level by the letter c, at the .05 level by b, and at the .01 level by a. N = 200.

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